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BRITISH COLUMBIA BEFORE CONFEDERATION.

Some Odds and Ends of Early History (1776 to 1864).

By E. O. S. SCHOLEFIELD, Provincial Librarian.



WHILE the annals of British Columbia are generally free from those exciting stories of stirring incidents that usually live in the traditions of nations, yet the history of our Province will be found by no means devoid of interest, and is often fascinating. Little or nothing is known of this portion of the coast of western North America previous to the year 1776, when that great circumnavigator, Captain Cook, visited and explored its shores. At that time the country was divided among savage tribes of Indians, who from time immemorial had held undisputed sway over the land. The ascendancy of the Indians, however, has long since waned and they are now fast disappearing from our midst.

DISCOVERY AND EARLY HISTORY OF THE PACIFIC.

Much romantic interest attaches to the history of the discovery of the Pacific Ocean in the 16th century. Spain was then in the very zenith of her fame as a mighty maritime nation. But the lustre of her glory was about to be dimmed and later totally eclipsed by England's rising naval power, which in after years was destined to astonish and awe the world.

The Spaniards were undoubtedly the pioneers of discovery on the Pacific Coast and their explorations were the result of endeavours to reach India by a western route. Vague accounts, too, of the wealth of China and Japan had come to the ears of these hardy adventurers, and they determined to monopolize the commerce in the gold, silks, spices and precious stones that rumour had it were produced in fabulous quantities by these countries.

Stories of Spanish successes on the Pacific Coast reached the shores of England and incited the sturdy seamen of that nation to visit these waters and take a hand in the game there being played.

Expeditions under well-known commanders were fitted out and despatched to the Pacific, more it must be confessed in the hope of reaping a rich reward by pillaging Spanish settlements than with any peaceful intention of exploration and discovery. These grim old privateers harried the Spanish Main, striking terror into the hearts of their enemies. Their names have been handed down in many a legend of blood and fire. But the narrative of their adventures is too well known to be repeated here even though space permitted.

The Pacific Ocean was discovered by Vasco Nunez de Balboa in the year 1513. From that date the work of exploration and discovery was continued at intervals. In 1532 the Spaniards fitted out an expedition under the command of Grizalva and Becerra, which succeeded in sighting the peninsula of Lower California. In 1535 the famous Cortez took possession of this peninsula in the name of His Catholic Majesty. A little later Spanish settlements were established on the coasts of Mexico and from one of these an expedition was despatched in 1542 to explore the coast to the north. It is claimed that this expedition reached the vicinity of the 43rd parallel and discovered Cape Blanco, named by Captain Vancouver at a later date, Cape Orford. In virtue of a Papal bull, conferring on Ferdinand and Isabella "all the new world to the westward of a meridian drawn a hundred leagues west of the Azores," Spain claimed possession of the territory thus explored. The remaining portion was assigned to Portugal by Pope Alexander VI. But when England renounced allegiance to the Roman See she ignored the validity of any title thus conferred "by donation by the Bishop of Rome," and maintained the right of British subjects to settle in any country not in the actual occupation of another Christian nation.

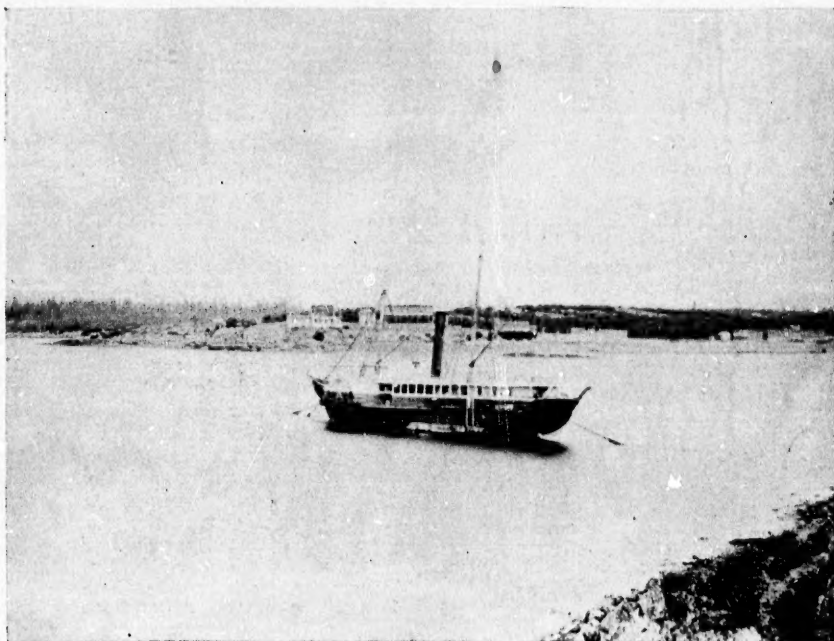
This policy having been officially de-

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clared by Queen Elizabeth, Sir Francis Drake, with the sanction of the authorities, started on his historic voyage to the Pacific with the object of harassing the Spanish fleet, which had hitherto held undisturbed control over the western coast of America. In 1577 this heroic buccaneer, who was the first Englishman to navigate the Straits of Magellan, sailed from Plymouth on his adventurous quest.

Drake, after hardships and losses

likely that this daring Englishman, whose romantic adventures will always live in the annals of British seamanship, paid very much attention to objects of less practical concern. His sole aim was to return safely with his plunder. With this end in view, rather than run the gauntlet of the Spaniards to the south, whom he well knew were burning to revenge the indignities suffered at his hands, Drake decided to return by way of the northwest passage, in the exist-



Hudson's Bay Company's Steamer Beaver.
The Beaver arrived at Astoria on April 4th, 1836.

which would have broken the spirit of a man less brave and determined, reached the Pacific and sailing north discovered California, which he named New Albion. His voyage, however, was not primarily one of discovery, but made rather with the object of plundering the richly laden galleons of Spain returning with spoils gathered from the ancient cities of South America, whose inhabitants were treated with such refined cruelty by their Iberian conquerors. It is, therefore, un-

ence of which he, in common with the mariners of his age, had a firm belief. Eventually he was forced to abandon his attempt and return by way of the Philippines and the Cape of Good Hope, thus completing the first voyage round the world.

The precise parallel of latitude reached by Drake on his northward voyage has been the subject of much discussion, more particularly in connection with the Oregon boundary. The chaplain of the

expedition specifies that "the height of forty-eight degrees" was attained. It is impossible, however, to ascertain at this late date the exact spot arrived at by Drake; but it is altogether probable that to him belongs the distinction of having been the first to lay claim to the land between the 43rd and 48th parallels of north latitude.

While reviewing the early history of the Pacific Coast, it would be improper, even in such a cursory resumé as the present, to pass without notice the story of the first reputed navigation of the channel separating the Mainland of Brit-

Queen Charlotte Sound. De Fuca imagined as he emerged into these waters that he had passed from the Pacific to the Atlantic and accordingly claimed to be regarded as the discoverer of the celebrated northwest passage, the search for which has only terminated in recent years. Interesting as the account of this voyage must always be it is nevertheless somewhat mythical; although, in justice to Juan de Fuca, it is but fair to state that in the light of modern research the story of his voyage has met with acceptance among those who have studied the early history of these waters.



Wreck of the Beaver, Brockton Point.

ish Columbia from the Island of Vancouver. It has been asserted that this voyage was accomplished by a Greek named Apostolos Valerianos, better known now as Juan de Fuca. In an exciting narrative published in 1625 by one Michael Lock it is set forth that this Greek, having been commissioned by the Spanish Governor of Mexico to explore these northern waters, entered the strait which bears his name, sailed through the Gulf of Georgia, and, having navigated safely the intricate passage to the north of the latter, at last reached

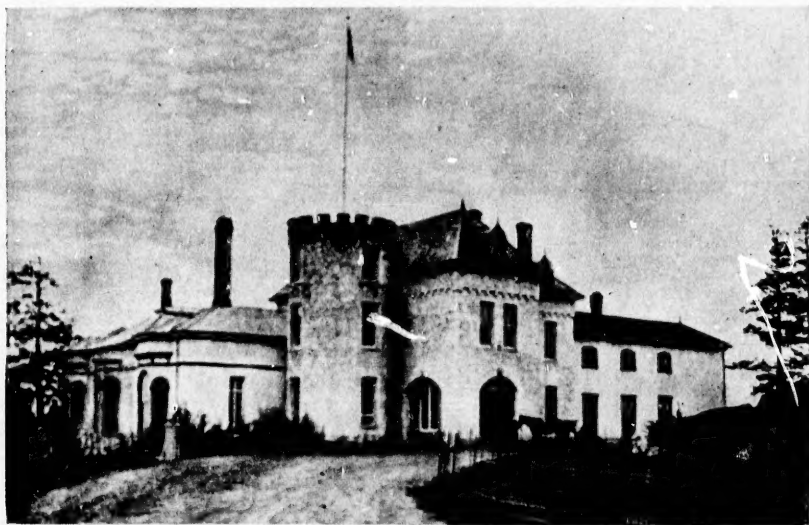
Cook, in his third great voyage, having, of course, heard of the voyage of Juan de Fuca, determined once and for all to dispose of any doubt in regard to the existence of the sheet of water claimed to have been navigated by the old Greek pilot. He therefore examined the coast with much care as far north as the 48th parallel. Finding no opening corresponding to De Fuca's description, he gave up the search and declared the story of this reputed discovery to have been altogether fictitious. Cook then continued his voyage up the coast, pass-

ing on his way north the entrance to the very strait in the existence of which he had averred his entire disbelief.

During the 18th century the British and Spanish prosecuted with more or less vigour the work of exploration along the west coast and many expeditions were despatched with a view to obtaining information concerning those wild, unknown waters. In 1774 Juan Perez set sail from Monterey on one of these exploratory surveys. Heading north he passed without notice the entrance to the Strait of Fuca and on the 18th of July sighted the Queen Charlotte Islands. On his homeward journey, it is alleged

believing that the latter was the one in vogue among the natives.

As previously mentioned, in the story of Captain Cook's great undertaking, which was given to the world in 1782, we have the first authentic description of an important part of the coast of British Columbia. Although Juan Perez had preceded Cook, yet little is known regarding the results attained by him owing to the fact that the records of his discoveries were never made public by the Spanish Government. Beyond the knowledge that Perez discovered the Queen Charlotte Islands and anchored in the vicinity of Nootka Sound,



Government House, Victoria, destroyed by fire in May, 1899.

by Spanish and American writers, he discovered Nootka Sound, and anchored in a bay named by him Port San Lorenzo, in honour of the Saint on whose day it was discovered. Some years later Captain Cook visited this spot, which he named King George Sound, after the king who had done so much to encourage among his subjects the exploration of far distant and little known lands. Cook, however, subsequently changed the name to Nootka,

which latter place was destined at a later period to play an important part in the history of this coast, we have little information respecting his expedition.

In succeeding years Captains Portlock and Dixon, Lieut. Meares, and many other traders and navigators, all more or less well known, visited and explored our coasts, many of whom have bequeathed to posterity interesting and valuable accounts of their adventures.

In the year 1788 Meares erected at Nootka a small building, which he fortified against the Indians. He then proceeded to the Strait of Juan de Fuca, leaving a portion of his crew to construct a small vessel to be used for trading purposes. This little sloop, christened the "Northwest-America," was the first vessel ever constructed in the country north of California. It may be interesting to add that it was built by the aid of Chinese carpenters, being, in all probability, the first instance of Mongolian employment in our Province. From this time on, Nootka derived some importance from becoming the rendezvous of

Spaniards determined to put a stop to all encroachments. Martinez was ordered to proceed to Nootka and in the name of Spain take possession of the Sound. Trouble arose between Martinez and Colnett and Hudson, who had been sent thither by Meares under the British flag. Finally, their ships, the Princess Royal, the Argonaut, and the Northwest-America, were seized and their cargoes placed on board the Spanish ships of war. Colnett was arrested and suffered many indignities at the hands of his captors, and, later, was sent to Mexico, where he was at last liberated by order of the Viceroy. The piratical



Old Post Office and Custom House, Victoria, thirty years ago.

the traders, who had already begun to frequent these waters for the purpose of procuring the valuable fur of the sea otter and other animals, in which a large and lucrative trade was soon established.

The Spanish authorities, who claimed the sole right to navigate the Pacific on the northwest coast of America, becoming aware of the visits of the various traders, sent an expedition in 1788 in command of Estinez Martinez and Gonzales Haro to obtain information regarding the reputed depredations of these adventurers. In the following year the

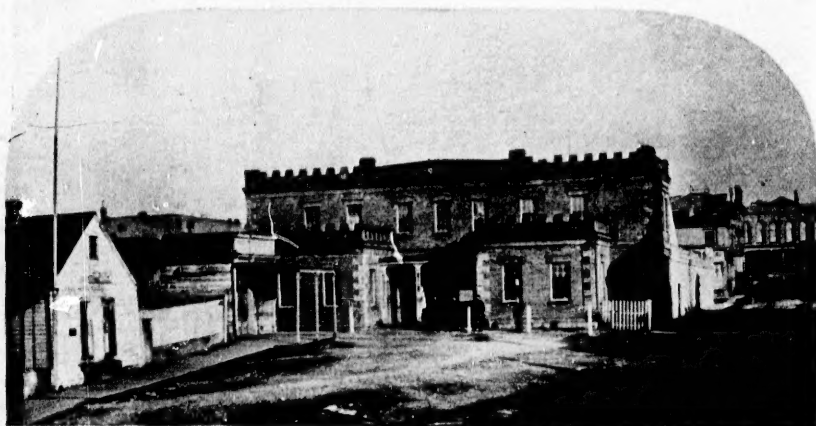
action of the Spanish commander, as soon as it became generally known, evoked the greatest indignation amongst the British people. In an inconceivably short space of time a large fleet was assembled and for some months the whole civilized world was in suspense and anxiety as to the issue. Eventually, however, Captain Vancouver was despatched in charge of the ship Discovery and the brig Chatham to determine with the Spanish Commissioner what indemnity should be made to the British subjects who had suffered on account of the un-

toward action of the emissary of the Spanish Government. It was in connection with this difficulty that Meares presented to the House of Commons his somewhat celebrated "Memorial on the Nootka Affair." The Spaniards eventually relinquished their extravagant claims, war was averted, and British supremacy was finally and firmly established.

In addition to the official business upon which he had been despatched, Vancouver was directed to explore the coast of the Pacific from the 35th to the 60th parallel of north latitude, and to keep a look out for the northwest passage. He was particularly ordered to examine

into the open waters of Queen Charlotte Sound. Arriving at Nootka, Vancouver and the Spanish Commander, Quadra, compared together the notes and charts of their voyages through the Strait of Fuca; and it was agreed between them that the great island which that arm of the sea separated from the American continent should bear the names of both. And thus it appeared on maps and charts for many years as the Island of Quadra and Vancouver, although the former name has now been dropped, and it is known to the world simply as Vancouver Island.

Vancouver departed on his homeward voyage in 1794. During the years he



The old jail, Bastion Square, Victoria, since pulled down.

with great care the Strait of Juan de Fuca. After a futile search for the mouth of the Columbia River, which was subsequently discovered by Captain Gray, after whose vessel this magnificent river was named, Vancouver proceeded to survey the Strait of Fuca. On the 22nd of June, 1792, as he was returning from Jervis Inlet he met the *Sutil* and *Mexicana*, two Spanish men-of-war, in command of Galiano and Valdes. Vancouver received a most courteous reception and information was exchanged in the most friendly manner. Then separating, Vancouver threaded his way through the islands of the Gulf of Georgia and Johnstone Strait, sailing at last

spent in the northwest American waters he was indefatigable in prosecuting the surveys, for which his name has since become justly famous. The explorations which he carried to such a successful issue have not been excelled by any other navigator. They were faithfully and thoroughly performed. The charts and plans drawn under his direction will always stand a lasting monument to the patience and industry displayed by this great navigator, often under very adverse circumstances. Vancouver died in May, 1798, completely worn out with his labours, before his report was quite finished.

It is impossible in the space allotted

to this article to discuss at any length, or even mention all those "forgotten worthies" who gave their time, and too often their lives, in exploring this coast. In many instances their only monuments are the names which they have left scattered up and down the shores of the Pacific. There is much to be admired in the characters of these rugged old sea dogs who braved the dangers of the unknown deep in their frail vessels, with scanty accommodation, and faulty instruments, in the vague endeavour to satisfy the restless, adventurous

prosperous communities along the coast of Northwest America.

THE HUDSON'S BAY COMPANY AND COLONIAL DAYS.

The history of the Great Northwest from Hudson's Bay to the Pacific is indissolubly linked to that of the powerful corporation, which for so many years guided the destinies of this great wilderness. On the 16th of May, 1669, Charles II. conferred a royal charter on the "The Governor and Company of Adventurers of England Trading into the Hudson's



Government House, New Westminster, in 1860.

spirit working within them. The spirit of the age in which they lived imbued them with a love of travel and adventure, which resulted in discoveries of vast importance to all mankind.

The search for the northwest passage, the desire for new and rich dominions by the rulers of the Old World; covetousness for the trade in the rich furs so greatly prized by all civilized nations; the thirst for gold; these were the potent causes that led to the exploration of these northern waters and resulted in the establishment of free and

Bay." This immense concern received many rights and privileges, the vast import of which was scarcely thought of when the grant was made.

By the terms of the charter, provisions were made for the election of a governor, of a deputy governor, and a committee of seven members, who were to have the direction of all voyages, sales, and other business of the company—for the election of new members—and for holding at particular periods a general court of the company. The first company and their successors were made lords pro-

prietors of the territories which had been granted them, holding the lands "in free and common socage, and not *in capite*, or by knight's service;" and they were empowered to make laws and regulations for the government of their possessions, which may "be reasonable, and not contrary or repugnant, but as near as may be agreeable, to the laws, statutes, and customs," of England. The whole trade, fishery, navigation, minerals, etc., of the countries under their control was granted to the company exclusively, all others of the King's subjects being forbidden to

Majesty's plantations or colonies, in America, called Rupert's land."

Thus it will be seen that the Hudson's Bay Company possessed by its charter almost sovereign powers over the portion of America drained by rivers flowing into Hudson's Bay. This great company gradually extended its sway until trading posts and forts were established on the shores of the Pacific itself. With the advent of the Hudson's Bay Company the history of British Columbia really commences. The early history of Canada on the Pacific is, in fact, but



Government Street, Victoria, in the Sixties.

"visit, haunt, frequent, trade, traffic, or adventure," therein, under heavy penalties, and the company was, moreover, empowered "to send ships, and to build fortifications, for the defence of its possessions," as well as to make war or peace with all nations or people, not Christian, inhabiting those territories, which are declared to be thenceforth "reckoned and reputed as one of His

the story of the occupation of this western land by that company.

As early as 1842 Chief Factor James Douglas (afterwards Sir James), had recommended the Indian village of Camosun (now Victoria) as a very proper site for a trading station and fort. The situation, to quote his own words, is not faultless or so completely suited for a place of settlement as it might be; but,

as he observes in his report of July 12th, 1842, after discussing the merits of various other ports on the Sound, "he despaired of anything better being found on the coast, and was confident that there was no seaport, north of the Columbia, where so many advantages could be found combined."

This favourable opinion was confirmed by Sir George Simpson in his despatch of the 21st of June, 1844, in which he says: "The situation of Victoria is peculiarly eligible, the country and climate remarkable, and the harbour excellent." And in June, 1846, he wrote: "Victoria promises to become a very important place."

After some consideration Sir James Douglas's recommendation was accepted, and in 1843 the company built a rude trading station, which was named Fort Victoria, opposite the Indian village of Camosun. Oddly enough this village exists to-day in sad contrast to the state-ly pile of Government buildings a few hundred yards distant across the water. The Indians hold treaty rights with regard to the reservation which the various Governments of the Dominion have felt it incumbent upon them to respect, although it would undoubtedly be better for all concerned if the Indian reserve could be shifted to a more suitable locality.

In 1848 a grant of Vancouver Island was made to the Hudson's Bay Company upon the condition that active measures should be taken within five years towards its colonization. The steps taken in this direction, however, failed to prove very successful, and beyond the somewhat prosperous station and farm at Victoria, a trading post at Fort Rupert, and a small settlement at Nanaimo, little use was made of Vancouver Island by British colonists.

By the deed of grant from the Crown, previously referred to, the company were allowed absolute control of the Colony of Vancouver Island for a period of ten years, from January, 1849. On the execution of the document, Mr. Richard Blanshard, an English barrister, received Her Majesty's commission as first Governor of the Island. He had a peculiar and difficult mission to perform in establishing constitutional government in

a land little more than an unexplored wilderness. Mr. Blanshard arrived in Victoria in March, 1850, and, it must be confessed, that he received a somewhat rude awakening with regard to the country over the destinies of which he had come to preside in his gubernatorial capacity. Victoria was simply at this date a very small trading post with scarcely a soul residing there who was not connected with the Hudson's Bay Company. There being no Government house or other lodging set apart to receive him the newly-installed Governor was compelled to remain on board H.M.S. *Driver* during her stay in the colony. One of the Governor's first official acts was to appoint Dr. John Sebastian Helmcken a magistrate of the colony. This is our first introduction to Dr. Helmcken, who was for years so intimately and honourably connected with our early history.

Unfortunately from the very first friction occurred between the Governor and the officials of the company, which, perhaps, was not altogether to be wondered at, when it is considered that he was appointed in direct opposition to the expressed wishes of the chairman, Sir John Pelly, who had desired the appointment for Chief Factor Douglas.

After a residence of two years in the country His Excellency, Governor Blanshard, who, it is only fair to state, had always endeavoured to discharge the duties appertaining to his high office conscientiously, resigned his commission. He left for England by way of California in H.M.S. *Daphne* in September, 1851. Before leaving, however, he appointed a Council of three to carry on the Government of the Island until a new appointment might be made. This Council was composed of James Douglas (Senior Member), James Cooper, and John Tod, all of whom rendered distinguished service to their adopted country. Thus ended the first chapter of the colonial history of Vancouver Island.

Nothing of any great note happened during Governor Blanshard's regime with the exception, perhaps, of some depredations committed by the Indians in the neighbourhood of Fort Rupert. A gunboat was despatched, however, to the scene of the disturbances; the law-

breakers were punished and peace and order restored.

Governor Blanshard, while he may not have been exactly fitted for the difficult position to which he had been called, was, undoubtedly, a very intelligent and able man. It must be borne in mind by his detractors, that during his brief sojourn in the colony he enjoyed wretched bodily health, and, therefore, was often unable to give adequate attention to public affairs. The peculiarity of Mr. Blanshard's situation as pioneer Governor necessitated that he should unite in himself the functions of executive and judge. In the latter capacity he was chiefly occupied in adjusting differences between the company and their servants. It must be added that the few independent settlers expressed great regret at the departure of the first Colonial Governor.

SIR JAMES DOUGLAS.

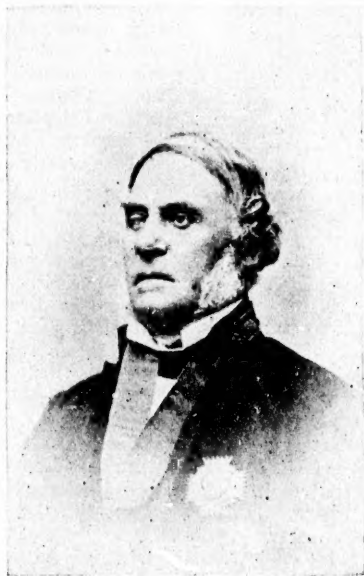
There is one figure who will always stand forth clearly and distinctly in the annals of our Province. Reference is, of course, made to His Excellency, Sir James Douglas, the second Colonial Governor of Vancouver Island. Endowed by nature with remarkable administrative ability and a forceful and energetic character he was in every respect admirably fitted to perform the task of founding in a far distant and little known land thriving settlements and establishing therein those principles of political liberty and religious freedom that have always distinguished British colonies. While, of course, it cannot be expected that all his official actions were marked with the same keen insight and sagacity, yet, it is but just to say that he was al-

ways guided by a stern sense of duty and a love of justice. His eminent merits were recognized by all who lived under his wise and beneficent administration. In his capacity as a private citizen he "wore the white flower of a blameless life."

The personal appearance of Governor Douglas was very striking. He was a fine specimen of nature's nobleman—tall, broad-shouldered, muscular, with a grave bronzed face, yet kindly withal. His stalwart figure was a familiar sight in the early days as he walked down the streets of Victoria followed at a respectful distance by his orderly in uniform.

Many anecdotes are related of this sturdy old representative of Her Majesty. One at least may bear repeating here, well illustrating, as it does, his great coolness and readiness in moments of danger—qualities which often stood him in good stead, when white men were few in these regions and the Indians by no means the harmless individuals that they have since become. On one occasion, when in command of an outlying trading post, his subordinate officer became exceedingly

alarmed over the behaviour of the Indians, who had for some time past displayed symptoms of rebellion. Becoming more violent than usual the savages forced their way into the enclosure itself. Rushing to Sir James the officer reported, in a very excited manner, that the Indians were in possession of the fort, and requested permission to call the men to arms to repel the expected attack. But to his complete surprise his superior officer quietly remarked in those measured and delib-

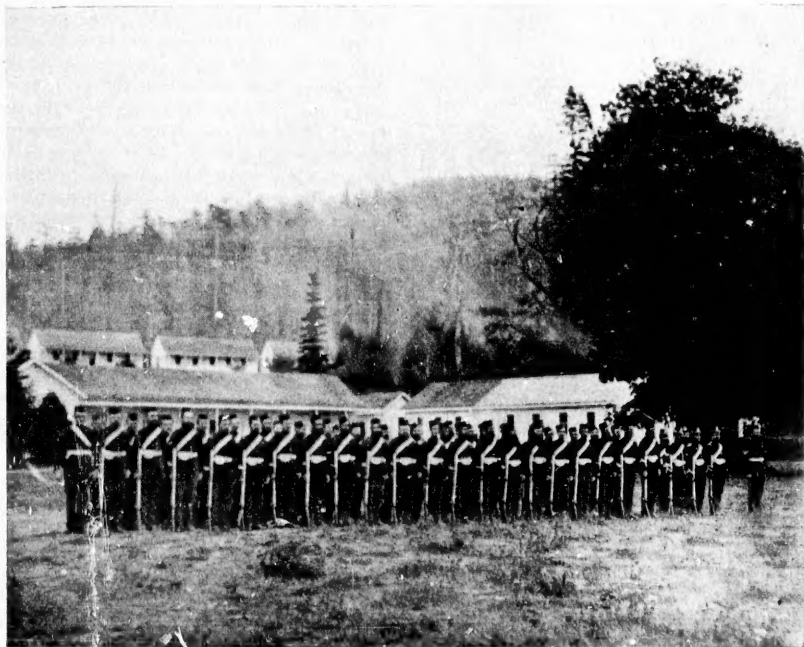


Sir James Douglas.

erate tones so characteristic of the man: "Give them a little bread and treacle, Mr. Finlaison; give them a little bread and treacle." Strange to relate this remedy soothed the turbulent crowd, when, in all probability, the entire garrison of the fort would have been unable to accomplish the desired end by resort to arms. Many illustrations might be given, but space forbids.

Sir James Douglas received his commission as Governor of Vancouver Island in November, 1851. For several years, however, on account of the sparse

Finlaison, and Mr. John Tod. In 1856 in accordance with his instructions, he called together the first Legislative Assembly of the colony. For this purpose the Island was divided into four electoral districts, Victoria, Esquimalt, Nanaimo and Sooke. These constituencies returned seven members between them, viz.: J. D. Pemberton, James Yates, E. E. Langford (who some time later gave place to J. W. McKay), Thomas Skinner, Dr. J. F. Kennedy, John Muir, and Dr. J. S. Helmcken. The Assembly met for the despatch of business for the first



Evacuation of San Juan Island, 1872.

ness of the population, the labours attaching to his office were not very arduous. In 1853 the total population of the whole Island did not exceed four hundred and fifty settlers.

Governor Douglas set about the business of establishing a suitable form of government with energy and despatch. He was assisted by an Executive Council composed of Mr. John Wark, Mr. R.

time in a room in the old fort, on the 12th of August. In such manner was responsible government established in the infancy of the colony by this somewhat primitive parliament.

THE SAN JUAN AFFAIR.

In the following years the celebrated San Juan boundary dispute assumed threatening proportions. Both Great

Britain and the United States claimed possession of this Island. The contention respecting this strip of territory extended over a period of twenty years and was conducted with much bitterness on both sides. For many years the island had been occupied by the Hudson's Bay Company, but by degrees it had become more or less populated by the citizens of the United States, chiefly miners, who had drifted thither from the Fraser River gold fields. The newcomers certainly did not form a very desirable element, and troubles soon occurred between the latter and the officials of the company. The Americans at last despatched an armed force to occupy and hold the island. The excitement in Victoria on the receipt of this intelligence was intense. It was entirely due to the good judgment displayed by Governor Douglas and Captain, afterwards, Admiral Prevost, of H.M.S. "Sutlej," that a collision, which would have been fraught with direful consequences, did not at once ensue.

Admiral Baynes and Governor Douglas finally agreed to a joint military occupation of the Island; and in March, 1860, a detachment of Royal Marines was disembarked on San Juan. After a long diplomatic discussion between the Imperial authorities and the Government of the United States, it was arranged that the whole question should be submitted to the arbitration and award of Emperor William of Germany. The final award was not made, however, until October 21st, 1872, when to the complete chagrin of the British authorities, judgment was given in favour of the United States. This decision, as might well be expected, caused the keenest disappointment in British Columbia. However, after the result of the negotiations was made known, San Juan was immediately evacuated by the British garrison. It may be interesting to add that this island was the last piece of United States territory to be occupied by British troops. Although this dispute created much animosity between Great Britain and the United States, yet the greatest cordiality existed between the officers and men of both nations during their joint occupancy of the Island.

Great credit is due to Sir James Douglas for the manner in which he conducted

affairs during this crisis. It is certain that only by his diplomacy and tact a great disaster was averted.

THE DISCOVERY OF GOLD

The existence of gold in British Columbia had been known to the Hudson's Bay Company many years before the news became generally public. The Indians had been accustomed to offer considerable quantities of the precious metal at the various fur trading depots in exchange for articles of food and clothing.

In 1857 a party of Canadians, having heard vague rumours on the subject, prospected the banks of the Thompson and Fraser Rivers. Their efforts were rewarded with some success. Intelligence of their good fortune spread like wildfire and excited in thousands the thirst for gold. In the following year vessels from California began to disembark immense crowds of gold-seekers at Victoria. This peaceful hamlet, containing at the most but two or three hundred inhabitants, was suddenly converted into a scene of bustle and excitement. In the short space of four months the population was augmented by nearly twenty thousand souls. This motley throng included gamblers, loafers and desperadoes; but it must not be imagined that this class alone found its way to Victoria. On the contrary among the immigrants were to be found many honourable and trustworthy men who made splendid settlers. The rich came to speculate and the poor in the hope of quickly amassing fortunes. One of the first consequences of this mad rush was a shortage in the supply of food. Exorbitantly high prices were asked and realized for goods of every description. The value of staple articles reached an extravagant figure, and twice a famine was threatened.

The influx was unprecedented and occurred so suddenly that the immigrants on their arrival were unable to secure lodgings of any sort or description. In every direction innumerable tents dotted the ground. As a contemporary writer puts it: "Victoria had at last been discovered, everybody was bound for Victoria, nobody could stop anywhere else, for there, and there alone, were fortunes, and large fortunes to be made." The news spread far and wide and new steamers landed fresh crowds. Even sailing vessels, old ships and tubs of all descrip-

tions, were actively employed in carrying passengers to the new El Dorado. And it is only to be wondered at that the number of appalling disasters at sea were not more numerous.

Shops, storehouses, and wooden shanties of every description were now going up on all sides and the din of the hammer and saw was perpetual. In six weeks two hundred and twenty-five buildings of all sorts and sizes were constructed. The price of land rose, too. Those who had purchased land before its rise in value reaped small fortunes. Business was flourishing, which was greatly owing to the fact that Victoria had been made a free port by Governor Douglas in years gone by. In fact the place was in the throes of a mighty boom, the reaction of which in after days was to cause much cursing and misery.

As can be readily imagined Governor Douglas was not an idle man during these feverish days. The responsibility of his office had increased an hundred-fold. But he was indefatigable in his endeavours to preserve law and order in the land—a task the magnitude of which cannot be properly comprehended at the present day. The country had been flooded by a roving population, among whom might be found the off-scourings of the world—desperate ruffians who had been accustomed to the lawlessness of American mining camps, and to whom the meaning of the word "Justice" was unknown. Sir James Douglas by his firmness and impartiality during this trying time evoked the admiration and respect of all right-minded men, and they were generally in the majority. Into the breasts of the riotously inclined he instilled a wholesome dread of the majesty of British law.

The bubble burst at last. Owing to the melting of the snows on the hill-tops during the summer months the bars on the Fraser River, the Mecca of the gold-hunters, are covered with water until winter sets in. Those, therefore, who reached the mining region during March or April succeeded in securing large quantities of gold from the bars and sands not yet covered with water. Unfortunately the mass of miners failed to arrive until a month or two later, and, consequently, found the auriferous parts submerged. Ignorant of the periodic

rise and fall of the streams, many, crest-fallen and disappointed, returned to Victoria. Still the arrivals were numerous and the town flourished until bad news commenced to arrive from the diggings, when the gloomiest foreboding soon began to prevail among the less venturesome spirits. The rumour took wing that the river would never fall, and as placer mining could only be prosecuted on bars, "the state of the river became the barometer of public hopes and the pivot on which everybody's expectations turned." This news acted as the first severe check to immigration, which, perhaps, was not an unmixed blessing. Thousands of miners lost all hope and wended their way back to California, broken in spirit and in purse. Victoria had fallen upon evil days, and affairs grew yet more distressing. The unemployed element became overbearing and created disturbances. On one particular occasion a party of disaffected citizens of the United States even went so far as to rescue a prisoner from the hands of the police, after the rough-and-ready manner in vogue in California, and actually had the audacity to propose that the Stars and Stripes should be hoisted over the fort. But a gunboat from Esquimalt soon quelled the riot and brought the pugnacious Americans to a proper state of mind.

It was some time ere Victoria recovered from this set-back; but before long better news arrived from the placer gold fields of newly discovered Cariboo, and Victoria once again began to assume importance as a rendezvous for miners. From this time her growth, if slower, was more permanent. Brick buildings began to replace the wooden structures so hastily built in the days of the gold excitement. From that time Victoria has increased in size and importance, until at present, its suburbs stretch miles distant from the site of the old fort. The old landmarks are fast disappearing and few would recognize in the modern city of to-day the rude backwoods trading post of fifty years ago.

In 1858, at the request of Lord Lytton, Secretary of State for the Colonies, Sir James Douglas severed his connection with the Hudson's Bay Company, as it was deemed incompatible for him to attend to the duties of both Governor and

Chief Factor, especially as it was feared that the interests of the Hudson's Bay Company and the Imperial Government might sometimes clash. On the 2nd of September, 1858, the Crown revoked the privileges of exclusive trade with the Indians granted to the Hudson's Bay Company some twenty years previously, and an Act to provide for the government of British Columbia was passed by the House of Commons. In the same year Sir James Douglas was appointed Governor of the new colony thus created. He was duly sworn in by Chief Justice Begbie (afterwards Sir Matthew Baillie) at Fort Langley. Sir James now divided his time between the two colonies, building roads and bridges and attending to other matters of importance. In spite of his increasing years he was almost as active as ever, making tours through the country and reporting thereon to the Colonial Secretary. Lord Lytton, who always exhibited the liveliest interest in the welfare of the two colonies on the Pacific.

In 1863 Sir James Douglas's commission as Governor of Vancouver Island lapsed. In that year he received the honour of knighthood in just recognition

of the great services which he had so faithfully rendered. Mr. Arthur Kenney was appointed Governor of Vancouver Island in his place.

In 1864, Mr. Frederick Seymour was appointed to succeed Sir James as Governor of the Colony of British Columbia. In the same year the latter retired from public life, and many were the manifestations of regret and found expression on the severance of his connection with official affairs. Thus we take leave of the strongest personality in the history of our Province, to whom we are indebted for the peaceful establishment of constitutional government in this distant part of the empire. Sir James died in 1867, full of years and honour.

It might be said in conclusion that it has been altogether impossible to more than refer in most general terms to a few interesting points connected with the earlier history of British Columbia. Many well-known names and many important events have been left unmentioned, not for lack of appreciation on the part of the writer, but simply because it is impossible to cover the whole ground in an article of this description.

